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# Top 10 German Words

[155](#)

Both my parents were born in Germany. They moved to Canada and then had me, so I'm about as German as a Canadian can be – which probably explains my weakness for sauerkraut, oom-pa-pa, and marzipan.

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I also have a love for the German [language](#). Some people make fun of it, but I grew up listening to my family speak it; so it reminds me of holidays, house parties, and home. Growing up, I was accustomed to my parents switching back and forth between English and German (particularly when they were excited).

Here are some of my favorite (and not-so-favorite) German words... feel free to add your own in the comments section below!

Pronunciations provided thanks to the nice people at [Forvo.com](#).

## Guidelines

I've confined myself to words readily available in German dictionaries. I've tried to avoid slang words or words unique to one of the many regional dialects. While researching words for this list, I was also shocked to learn that my Oma (Grandmother) had probably made some of my favorite words up.

For example, I was unable to include 'Muesterchen (Muesterkens)\*' because I couldn't prove that this word exists outside my immediate family. Muesterchen/Muesterkens (translation: little patterns) are the marks fabrics leave on your face while you are asleep. There should be a word for this in [every language](#) (nappers of the world, unite!). It shouldn't take eleven words to describe this thing that happens to my face at least once a day, it's just not efficient. It's almost a haiku, for heaven's sake.

\*Spelling variations added as a result of comments (see below).

I've also left out German words that just describe my favorite things ("beer" is German, for example). Instead, I've included words that I find particularly [interesting](#) or unique.

This list also does not include phrases (sayings, idioms). There is definitely room for a Top 10 German Phrases list, because there are some real German gems. For example the German equivalent of "to paint the town red" is "die Sau rauslassen" ("Let the pig out!").

## 10. Flusen

**translation: flusen (bits of fluff)**





Fussel, Flusen, Faser, Mull- -all of these words are synonymous with the English word “lint”. When I look up lint in an English thesaurus, only fuzz and fluff fit (perhaps pill works as well...) – yet all of these words all have other meanings as well. Fahnemuse (literal: fahne = flag, muse = ???) This is the word my family uses for the lint that shows up between a baby’s fingers and toes and (regrettably) adult male bellybuttons. Extremely specific and one of my favorite words of all time...

## 9. Umweltverschmutzung

**translation: the dirtying up of the world (pollution)**

 [Umweltverschmutzung](#)



How can someone argue that umweltverschmutzung is acceptable when it’s called what it is? This is an example of where a precise and unflattering word is effective (doesn’t quite make up for the ‘fleisch’ and the ‘speck’, however).

74 percent of Germans rate protecting the environment as very important, according to the [Deutsche Welle](#). Further, proof: Germany’s Green Dot system, which has been “one of the most successful [recycling initiatives](#)” and “has literally put packaging on a diet. The crux is that manufacturers and retailers have to pay for a ‘Green Dot’ on products: the more packaging there is, the higher the fee” ([Howtogermany.com](#)).

## 8. Brustwarze

**translation: brust (breast) warze (warts)**

 [Brustwarze](#)



According to [increasemyvocabulary.com](http://increasemyvocabulary.com), the English word “nipple” originates from the Old English word “neb,” which means “bill, beak, [or] snout, hence, lit[erally]...a small projection.” I admit that the English word for nipple is disappointing for a body part that gets so much attention (if only because of it’s location), but at least it’s not disgusting. Breast warts? *Sexy*. Remember the controversy over Janet Jackson’s Super Bowl wardrobe malfunction? Imagine if the following article at Prefixmag.com was in German, here’s the headline: “Janet Jackson’s Breast Wart Still Causing Problems” and the first sentence, “Janet Jackson’s breast wart just won’t go away.” Yuck ([Janet Jackson’s Nipple Still Causing Problems](http://Janet Jackson’s Nipple Still Causing Problems), by Nick Neyland).

## 7. Tie: Weltschmerz and Lebensmüde

**translations: welt (world) schmerz (pain) and lebens (living) müde (tired)**

[▶ Weltschmerz](#)

[▶ lebensmüde](#)



Germans are sure good at making melancholy and moodiness seem romantic: I guess that’s why the Wave-Gotik-Treffen (Wave-Gothic-Meeting) festival in Leipzig, Germany is so popular every year. That’s when 25,000 people catch the 200 performances of ‘dark music’ (death rock, dark electro, EBM, metal, industrial). In between shows, I imagine that attendees compare their black fashions, sigh heavily a lot, and throw words like ‘weltschmerz’ around... The word [weltschmerz](#) translates literally to “world pain” and, according to Merriam-Webster online, means “mental depression or apathy caused by comparison of the actual state of the world with an ideal state.” Germans also have another word similar to “weltschmerz”: “lebensmüde.” According to [reverso.net](http://reverso.net), lebensmüde is a way to describe someone who is “weary” or “tired of life”. Literally “leben” means

“to live” and “müde” means “tired”. The closest English synonym is “suicidal”, but it is really only a very superficial translation. If you ask someone if they are “lebensmüde”, you are asking, “Are you nuts?!” (“Are you trying to get yourself killed?!”) The English [language](#) has the phrase “world weary” but it means more that you are tired with the world, which isn’t quite the same thing. Sometimes “world weary” is also defined as “bored with the world” which makes the person seem more snobby and high maintenance than someone who feels “lebensmüde.” A person who is tired of life is much more sympathetic – sort of like all of the little things are grinding them down.

## 6. Schadenfreude

**translation:** schaden (harm) freude (joy)

 [Schadenfreude](#)



Schadenfreude is when you take pleasure in someone else’s pain. Schadenfreude is not to be confused with the word “sadism”, which is about inflicting pain. Bravo to the Germans for being honest enough to admit that we humans experience this feeling once in a while. In English, it takes a lot of words (and probably a whole lot of excuses) to admit to the same thing. When the rain at the very first Lollapalooza outed all of the posers who had dyed their hair temporarily for the one day, I distinctly remember feeling schadenfreude (and relief I hadn’t done the same thing!). Now, I’m not trying to justify my snotty teenage behavior here – it’s the only example I could think of. It’s also essential advice if you are going to try to blend in at the next Wave-Gotik-Treffen: bring an umbrella!

## 5. Fleisch

**translation:** fleisch (flesh)

 [Fleisch](#)



[Germans are known for their practical and logical nature](#), but I don't always appreciate it. For example, we English-speakers like to use words for food that are easier to swallow. Fleisch sounds a little bit too much like flesh, for my taste. Oh, and it actually means flesh, just in case you were hoping it meant something else. According to [lookwayup.com](#), this word is used to identify both human flesh and "the flesh of animals used as food". Cannibals and zombies aside, I wonder how many English-speaking people who move to Germany become vegetarians in response to the common terms used for pork (pig flesh), beef (cow flesh), and particularly veal (calf flesh). Ewww. (Image: [Greatwigs.co.uk](#))

## 4. Speck

**translation: speck (fat)**



Just when I've forced the 'flesh-eating' images out of my head, I remember that Germans call bacon "speck" which translates to "fat". What a huge under-sell! I'm all for the famous German efficiency – but I think that this time they have really over-generalized!

According to the German-English dictionary at [dict.tu-chemnitz.de](#), the phrase "Speck ansetzen" means "to put it on." I'm glad I don't have to say "I'm really putting on the bacon" whenever I worry about my weight! If you're going to reduce bacon to the term "fat", you might as well start calling chocolate "cellulite".

Just in case any of you are going to argue that bacon isn't a German food and therefore doesn't have it's own word, I want to point out that the word speck replaced the word "bachen," which comes from the same word origin as "bacon". This is according to [Wikipedia](#), so it must be true.

[I love bacon](#) (obviously, since I am in the midst of a bacon-focussed rant). Contrast the German's unforgivable disregard for bacon with the celebration of International Bacon Day (September 5) and the popularity of websites like the [royalbaconsociety.com](#) and [baconfreak.com](#). The Bacon page on Facebook has over 470 ,000 fans. The Speck page? Less than 5,000. So, literally, Germans give bacon a bad name.



Shakespeare asked, “What’s in a name?” but his buddy Francis Bacon would probably have replied, “It could be worse – the Italian word for it is lardo.”

### 3. Nudel

translation: noodle



Here’s where the Germans make up for their tragic abuse of bacon... They are famous for all sorts of food: sauerkraut, schnitzel, wieners... but did you know “noodle” was a German word? According to [daube.ch](http://daube.ch), “[pasta](#) of all sorts is the domain of Italians. Nevertheless the German word noodle came [in] to use before the big impact of the Italian kitchen to the northern regions.”

### 2. Schwangerschaftsverhütungsmittel

translation: schwangerschaft (pregnancy) verhütung (averting/prevention) mittel (remedy for/means).

 [Schwangerschaftsverhütungsmittel](#)



In other words, a *contraceptive*. This is such a long word that by the time you ask someone to use one, it might be too late!

### 1. Rindfleischetikettierungsüberwachungsaufgaben- übertragungsgesetz

translation: Rind (cattle) Fleisch (meat) Etikettierung(s) (labelling) Überwachung (supervision) Aufgaben (duties)  
Übertragung (assignment) Gesetz (law)



[Rindfleischetikettierungsüberwachungsaufgabenübertragungsgesetz](#) (“Beef labelling supervision duty assignment law”) is the longest German word I could find. Basically it is an outrageously long compound word, and the German language is very comfortable with compound words, if not downright in love with them. Don’t let them intimidate you: most of the longer German words are made up of several words put together, which makes them easy to understand (if you understand German). According to participants in a forum at [astrowars.com](#), the longest German word that is not a compound word is “Unkameradschaftlichkeit” (Unkameradschaftlichkeit is a kind of “unsporting behavior” among soldiers).

▶ [Unkameradschaftlichkeit](#)

In contrast, the longest word in the English dictionary is Pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis ([Wikipedia](#)). Looks like the English language wins for longest word, although one might argue that a medical term is actually Latin and universal...

My favorite long German word, which I found in a discussion at [bbc.co.uk](#), is “Schwarzwälderkirchentortenlieferantenhut” (the hat of the black forest [cake](#) delivery person).

▶ [Schwarz-wälder-kirchentorten-lieferanten-hut](#) Another long word, “Verbesserungsvorschlagsversammlung”, literally meaning a gathering of suggestions for improvement. As in, if you don’t agree with this list, feel free to “Mach mal einen Verbesserungsvorschlag” (make a suggestion for improvement sometime). ▶ [Verbesserungsvorschlagsversammlung](#)



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Posted by [Tanya Bennett](#) on Wednesday, May 26, 2010 at 12:01 am  
Filed under [Humor](#), [Misc](#)

## Comments

## 155 Responses to "Top 10 German Words"

1. *Tristan* says:

[May 26, 2010 at 1:33 am](#)

Funny list to hear foreigners to talk about our language, but Noodle isnt correct, its Nudel 😊

[Reply](#)

◦ *Tanya Bennett* says:

[May 26, 2010 at 7:59 am](#)

Es tut mir Leid- that's probably not correct either, but I tried 😊 – thanks for letting me know, just fixed it

[Reply](#)

◦ *adam* says:

[February 2, 2012 at 10:25 am](#)

That's what it say's fitz

[Reply](#)

2. *Spell* says:

[May 26, 2010 at 1:47 am](#)

the german word for noodle is Nudel. Lebenmüde is written with ü, write it at least Lebensmuede, when you can't use a ü.

other than that, you gathered some nice stuff here^^

your parents seem to speak a very strange dialekt, i cannot even tell in which part of germany they might have lived.

i never heard words like "oom-pa-pa" or "muestikens" or "Fahnemuse".

most germans prefer saying nippel too, its just better saying a word that is not disgusting, when youre having some "sexy talk" with your girlfriend^^ when youre talking biologically about bodies we prefer saying Brustwarze.

and those long made up words... well you can combine as many words as you want, but you would most likely never hear such long words =P

well except for Schwangerschaftsverhütungsmittel^^

Schwarzwälderkirchtortenlieferantenhut

you don't combine Schwarzwälder and Kirchtorte,

those two words together are a name,

it is "Schwarzwälder Kirchtorte"

schwarzwälder would usually be written in small letters since it's not a noun,

but Schwarzwälder Kirchtorte is a defined and wellknown thing =P

in that case you would probably hear:

"der Hut des Lieferanten für Schwarzwälder Kirchtorten" or something like that,

saying Schwarzwälder Kirchtortenlieferantenhut would be very confusing, because it would sound like youre talking about a guy from the black forest who delivers cherrycake =P

sorry if this is hard to read, i am german and i just got up^^

[Reply](#)

◦ *Tanya Bennett* says:



[May 26, 2010 at 7:44 am](#)

Your English is certainly much better than my German 😊 Thanks so much for the extra information about the words (and the correction – I will fix Nudel write away). My mom was born in Ratingen outside of Dusseldorf and I'm not sure where my dad was born, I'll have to ask... I'd also be interested to know your favorite English words, if you have any –

[Reply](#)

3. [Anne Iredale](#) says:

[May 26, 2010 at 5:15 am](#)

What a great list. I am fascinated by German culture and I've just started to learn German. My favourite word is Zeitgeist – meaning spirit of the age.

[Reply](#)

- [TopTenz Master](#) says:

[May 26, 2010 at 8:40 am](#)

Anne, Zeitgeist is one of my favorite words of all-time too, German or otherwise. A professor of mine in college was German and he taught us that word. Loved it ever since.

[Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:

[May 26, 2010 at 2:01 pm](#)

Thanks Anne! Looking forward to your next list, too! (Anne, from Yorkshire, is our resident English expert – check out her <http://www.toptenz.net/top-10-uk-locations-you-may-have-overlooked.php>.)

[Reply](#)

4. [George R Perry](#) says:

[May 26, 2010 at 8:47 am](#)

Schadenfreude – a word for a way that only poets talk.

[Reply](#)

- [Joerg](#) says:

[February 7, 2011 at 7:51 pm](#)

You must be confused. “Schadenfreude” is a word describing the joy felt over someone else’s misfortune. For example, when you see people get clobbered on Wipeout and laugh, you are feeling Schadenfreude.

[Reply](#)

5. [that german guy](#) says:

[May 26, 2010 at 12:28 pm](#)

hehe.. enjoyed the picture of thousands of german goths "comparing their black fashions, sighing heavily a lot, and throwing words like ‘weltschmerz’ around" a lot! I've been to some gothic festivals and it's actually a lot of fun, despite the black clothing 😊

Now, seriously .. how do you think your steak is made? out of imagination? Nah ah! It's Fleisch and yes, it's basically the same as yours... That's nature!

To name my favourite english word is a though one.. to me they nearly all sound beautiful (without knowing why)

"epiphany" is a beautie. and i use "neat" inflationary ^^

did you know that recently we have jokes going round where you translate german redewendungen (figures of speech) directly into english? something like: "My english is under all pig" , "Now we have the salad!", "You don't have all the cups in the closet" , "I think my pig whistles" .. and so on 😊

Gute Nacht aus Deutschland!

[Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:  
[May 26, 2010 at 1:31 pm](#)

That would be another great list "Top 10 German Idioms" <http://www.toptenz.net/submit-a-top-ten-list>. Thanks for your favorite English words, too – epiphany is a good one, for sure! I'm a big fan of oxymorons, such as 'jumbo shrimp' and 'bitter sweet', and (if you live in Vancouver BC like I do) 'affordable housing.'

[Reply](#)

- [mkh](#) says:  
[December 27, 2010 at 9:34 pm](#)

I know I'm late to the party but I just wanted to add:  
"My dear Mister Singing-Contest"

[Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:  
[December 28, 2010 at 2:40 pm](#)

What is the German word for that? I tried to find it online but haven't had any luck...

[Reply](#)

- [sandra](#) says:  
[December 30, 2010 at 6:56 pm](#)

first of all, great list!

"singing contest" is not an exact translation, according to [www . leo . org](http://www.leo.org) it should be "choral society". The idiom is an exclamation when you are surprised or astonished:

"Mein lieber Herr Gesangsverein!"

I don't know the origin of this, but there are more sayings which start with "mein lieber..." but eventually they never really make sense and they all mean the same: you're baffled.

Mein lieber Schwan! (my dear swan)

Mein lieber Herr Schutzmann! (my dear Mr. Officer) Schutzman is an outdated word for a policeman in uniform.

Mein lieber Herr Kanalarbeiter! (my dear Mr. channel digger)

and your "Müsterkens"? That's pretty much "Plattdeutsch / Niederdeutsch" dialect, (or Platt / plattdütsk) which is quite similar to dutch. There are different versions of this dialect spoken in the northern parts of germany.

"Müster-" stems from "Muster" (pattern).

The ending "-ken" is platt for "-chen".

If you add "-chen" to a word you mean sth. small, or you're mocking sth. e.g.

Brot -> Brötchen (bread -> buns)

Schokoladentafel -> Schokoladentäfelchen (bar of chocolate -> small bar of chocolate)

but: Prinzessin -> Prinzesschen (princess -> mocking for someone an english speaking person might call a Diva)

a, o and u become ä, ö and ü when you add "-chen".

So "Müsterkens" means exactly what your Oma called them: you've got small patterns on your face... 😊  
Alles Liebe aus Deutschland!! ^^

[Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:  
[January 2, 2011 at 5:48 pm](#)

Thanks for all of the info! I didn't know about the "Mein lieber..." idioms but, while reading, realized I have actually heard something like that used (I just had no idea what the person meant). Also thanks for the extra help with my mysterious Münsterkens 😊

[Reply](#)

6. [Eric Gehler](#) says:

[May 26, 2010 at 12:59 pm](#)

Ausgezeichnet! Being 75% German, and having lived in Germany for 8 years ( Military Brat) it was a welcome site to see a few of "Deutsche Worts" and images that bring back some fond memories. Keep up the good work!.

Ich wunche mehr!!

[Reply](#)

◦ [Tanya Bennett](#) says:

[May 26, 2010 at 2:03 pm](#)

Vielen Dank!

[Reply](#)

7. [Jano](#) says:

[May 26, 2010 at 1:53 pm](#)

Great list.....its funny but interesting to hear foreigners talk about (my) language.....

Danke und Grüße aus Deutschland ( Thanks and regards from Germany)

[Reply](#)

8. [Sig](#) says:

[May 26, 2010 at 3:52 pm](#)

How about Puderzucker? My favorite.

[Reply](#)

◦ [Tanya Bennett](#) says:

[May 27, 2010 at 10:55 am](#)

That IS a good one: powder sugar? I'm guessing that's icing sugar? I'm also a fan of "Handschuh" (Glove: literal translation "hand shoe").

[Reply](#)

■ [Signoro Incognito](#) says:

[July 5, 2010 at 2:20 pm](#)

Bavarian (Baorisch) is the best. And here almost everything English speakers relate as GERman comes from (Dirndl, Oktoberfest, dachshunds, yodel, the thigh-slap-dancing).

Dackl= dachshund. Wadl= calf (of legs). Irxn= strength.

Gschämig= ashamed, shy.

Speiben= vomit!

Schnapsstamperl= schnapps shot glass!

Nudelwalker- rolling pin!

Goaßlschnalzen- whip cracking

pumperlgesund- fit as a fiddle (one word idiom)

Rude:

Rauraurer=

arschlängs- a\$\$ backwards!

scheissenhosen- little sh!t pants- a small boy.

Schnellscheissenhosen- quick sh!t pants- safety trousers for chainsaw

Arschspalte- plumbers a\$\$ crack

Maurerdekollété- builder's decollatage- builder or labourer a\$\$ crack.

HolzvibratorenWaldmichlsholdi- Waldmichlsholdi company wooden forest vibrator!

[Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:  
[July 8, 2010 at 8:10 pm](#)

"plumber's decollatage" – I think I'm going to start using that one in English – it's awesome...

[Reply](#)

- [tim](#) says:  
[January 6, 2011 at 7:32 pm](#)

‘And here almost everything English speakers relate as GERman comes from’  
Surely not almost everything, but at least a lot.  
Very Sadly, but true.

It really annoys me the foreign view on germany has often such a strong bavarian influence. Especially among people from NorthAmerica and Asia, its just because of the Oktoberfest.

i dont think ‘Maurerdekollété’ has a bavarian origin, ‘dekollté’ is french so i think it originates from the western parts of germany that were occupied by Napoleons troops.

[Reply](#)

9. [RobertfH](#) says:  
[May 27, 2010 at 1:23 am](#)

"Muestikens": Your grandmother did not make this up. It is northern dialect for "Muesterchen" and that means literally "little marks" in German.

[Reply](#)

- [Tanya](#) says:  
[May 27, 2010 at 7:50 am](#)

Hurray! Thank you for solving this mystery for me – this is the best word ever 😊

[Reply](#)

- [pedant](#) says:  
[August 4, 2010 at 3:41 am](#)

A "Muster" is a pattern (though it can also mean "sample"), not than just a mark. A "Muesterchen" is a little pattern.

[Reply](#)

10. [Francesca Maggi](#) says:  
[May 27, 2010 at 1:39 am](#)

Great post! I will post a link on our open blog UpYourBottom!

In the meantime, you might get a big kick out of all the mistakes in German people are posting on our contest...! We are collecting people's language mistakes — You could probably come up with a Top10 from the picks...

Check it out – vote your favorite – or add some of your own -

Here's a link to one entry, but there are many many more.

<http://bit.ly/9G29QM>

Danke!

FMaggi

[Reply](#)

11. [Francesca Maggi](#) says:  
[May 27, 2010 at 5:46 am](#)

Re: Bacon & Lard

In fact, bacon is bacon / speck is speck – that seems to be just a crummy translation.

In Italian, bacon = pancetta / speck is some wild derivation of it / and lardo = lard — only the white fat part which some people with hardening of the arteries to the brain believe is a delicacy.

It probably has more to do with the part of the pig the meat comes from, but, I use speck/bacon pretty interchangeably.

Fmaggi

Burnt by the Tuscan Sun

[Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:  
[May 31, 2010 at 3:02 pm](#)

You say "bacon is bacon / speck is speck" but then say you "use speck/bacon pretty interchangeably?" I don't think I understand the point you are making –

[Reply](#)

- [Joerg](#) says:  
[February 7, 2011 at 8:16 pm](#)

I think she means that “speck” is literally “bacon”, not “fat”. “Speck ansetzen” does mean putting on a little weight, but it’s not as strong as the english word “fat”. The German word for “fat” is “fett” and can also be described to describe people, but it’s stronger. “Speck” in regard to describing people refers to a little extra padding. For example “Babyspeck” is baby fat. In other instances the word used along the same lines to describe someone who’s a little pudgy, but not someone who’s really fat, or even obese. So, to say “speck” is “fat” is incorrect.

[Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:  
[February 7, 2011 at 10:42 pm](#)

That reminds me of another favorite German word – speck bauchlein- which is the word my mom uses to describe a baby’s belly – an example of how ‘Speck’ must mean a little extra padding – and actually cute, rather than overweight. Maybe chubby is a better definition for speck than fat...

[Reply](#)

12. [Lola](#) says:  
[May 27, 2010 at 2:24 pm](#)

I love the word: Wiederfereihnigung ( I am not sure of the spelling, it was so long ago. Now I learn english, and my german disappear ).

It means reunification

[Reply](#)



- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:  
[May 31, 2010 at 2:59 pm](#)

wieder = again Vereinigung = union, so basically "to unite again." Nice word, thank you for sharing it.

[Reply](#)

13. *Xuthltan* says:

[June 27, 2010 at 5:38 pm](#)

genomen is my favorite its past-tense for take in german

it sounds like nom nom

[Reply](#)

- *Tanya* says:  
[June 28, 2010 at 8:51 am](#)

Love it!

[Reply](#)

- *Miro* says:  
[July 27, 2010 at 3:20 am](#)

sorry for correcting but it will be written with a double "m" -> genommen so you spell it with a short "o"

when there is only one "m" it will more sound like mmh maybe liek this -> genohmen

the "h" behind a vowel makes the A,E,I,O or U sound longer and it is spelled a little slower than without

(mmh I hope that "vowel" (ger.: Vokal) is the right word. I had to use leo.org for it)

[Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:  
[July 28, 2010 at 2:27 pm](#)

Interesting – you can hear the pronunciation at forvo.com <http://www.forvo.com/word/genommen#de>

[Reply](#)

14. *Pastlife* says:

[July 3, 2010 at 6:50 am](#)

I don't know this for shure, but since I am from North-Germany and someone allready came up with "Musterchen/Müsterchen" :

The name "Fahnmuse" could be an Netherlands Familyname (Das schöne Holland liegt so nah).

In that case muse would be the same as the english muse and you would "cogitate" aka "muse" the flag which sounds beautiful (especially under this article)

Greetings from Niedersachsen

[Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:  
[July 4, 2010 at 1:20 pm](#)

Possibly an example of hyperbole, where gazing at one's belly button (or toe) lint is raised to the status of gazing at a flag? Interesting.

[Reply](#)

15. *Marie* says:

[July 4, 2010 at 1:59 pm](#)

I got another two words which have no english translation.

Gemütlichkeit, which is a noun for feeling comfortable

and Schilderwald, which means, there are as many roadsigns as trees in a forest.

According to this, a beautiful german term is “You can’t see the forest, because there are so many trees”/ “Man sieht den Wald vor lauter Bäumen nicht”.

However, I would never see bacon and Speck as the same thing. I would call it Schinken (gammon I think) which describes it is taken from the bottom of the pig, but it is also not the same as bacon.

My brother loves it and he only uses the word bacon, because there is no adequate translation.

I hope I could help a little

#### [Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:

[July 4, 2010 at 1:01 pm](#)

According to one German expert- okay, my mom 😊 – Speck is used for bacon and Schinkenspeck is more like prosciutto, whereas Schinken all on it's own is the word used for ham. It's very likely that the usage varies in different regions. For example, there is also Canadian bacon (round slices of ham) which I just call 'ham' even though I am Canadian, but that Americans call "Canadian bacon." Not sure why... I had never heard of gammon before and looked it up. I would just call that ham, but I can definitely see what you mean.

I love the word Gemütlichkeit – just reading the word evokes childhood memories of evenings at home with my family (fireplace going, snacks on the table, etc). Thank you for reminding me of this word! Schilderwald is hilarious –

#### [Reply](#)

16. *Sebastian* says:

[July 5, 2010 at 1:38 am](#)

"Menschentraube" is also an unusual one. Menschen- (people/humans) Traube (grape) means a knot of people, for example people in front of a store, waiting to get in.

One of my favourite english expressions is couch potato. This could be translated as "Stubenhocker", or if you're teasing someone you can also use "Sesselpupser", but there is a huge variety of german synonyms for this.

#### [Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:

[July 8, 2010 at 8:14 pm](#)

trying to look up the literal translations... "Stubenhocker" means "room stool"? Could that be right? I hope so, it's funny! And "Sesselpupser" is "armchair fart" ??? Awesome! I also saw one called "sofawurst" ("sofa sausage") Yay! I love German!

#### [Reply](#)

- *Danny F* says:

[December 7, 2010 at 1:37 am](#)

Actually THIS “hocker” comes from “hocken” which can mean “to sit” or “to squat”. So a “Hocker” is someone who “hockt”. Someone who is sitting in his room all day is a Stubenhocker.

You are right though, a Hocker is also a small stool (which you often step on to reach higher up shelves)

#### [Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:

[December 7, 2010 at 7:46 pm](#)

interesting and that definition makes more sense – thanks for helping me out

#### [Reply](#)

- *Annie* says:

[January 28, 2011 at 4:07 pm](#)

the “sesselpupser” ist also not really the “armchair fart” but someone who farts in his armchair because he is sitting there the whole day (instead of sitting on a couch or a “hocker”).

[Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:  
[January 30, 2011 at 2:04 pm](#)

Thank you for the correction – often my interpretation skills stink as much as the above-mentioned chair, so it’s great when someone who actually lives in Germany helps me out!

[Reply](#)

17. [germanexpat](#) says:  
[July 5, 2010 at 3:13 am](#)

First at you longest english orwd Pneu..... is part latin/greek and is asembled

The english language comes to aprox. 50% from german, angelic / angelsaechsisch & normanic

A very nice word for englisch speaking people is SCHRAUBVERSCHLUSS and now the longest german Word I know ;

Oberammergauerpensionsfestspieljubilaemssahnekaeseschnittchen

[Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:  
[July 8, 2010 at 8:19 pm](#)

Looked it up and Schrauberverschluss is a screw top lid? (Literal translation: screwdriver + lock.)

What's the translation for that big long word you left us?

[Reply](#)

- [Joerg](#) says:  
[February 7, 2011 at 8:41 pm](#)

Ok, lets see...

Oberammergauerpensionsfestspieljubilaemssahnekaeseschnittchen

refers to something similar to cheesecake (that’s the sahnkaeseschnittchen part), which is from “Oberammergau” (simply the name of a place) the “er” on the end of “Oberammergau” signifies that this is something from Oberammergau, just as Berliner and Hamburger are things from Berlin and Hamburg, respectively. Furthermore, this “cheese cake” is made for the anniversary (jubilaem) of a play(spiel, as in a theater play, not football) which is held at the “Passionsfest” (a celebration of the Passion of Christ).

[Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:  
[February 7, 2011 at 10:44 pm](#)

Thank you – now I am craving cheesecake...

[Reply](#)

18. [Kristin](#) says:  
[July 5, 2010 at 9:24 pm](#)

Love the list.

I was an exchange student in Germany many moons ago. My favourite word is Krankenwagen (sick car i.e. ambulance) – for no other reason than I think it sounds cool! This is closely followed by Gemuetlich which has no direct English translation but can mean anything from familiar, cosy, pleasant etc. I love the word – it encapsulates so much.

[Reply](#)

19. *Stefan* says:

[July 6, 2010 at 5:52 am](#)

Hey there, to shed some light on the bacon/speck topic:

We in Germany do differentiate between different sorts of meat 😊

"Speck" is a rather generic term:

"weißer Speck" (weiß=white) or "fetter Speck" usually means the white fat underneath the skin without or with with very little meat, that is what "lardo" is made from, which by the way is nothing short of mouthwateringly delicious 😊 It is mostly made of the neck and back of pigs. that is "fat".

Then there is "durchwachsener Speck" which mean white fat streaked through with muscle mass, the "real" meat.

It is either from the ribs or the belly, which is then called "Bauchfleisch" (belly meat) or it is cut from the buttocks which then is "Schinkenspeck".

sliced "Bauchfleisch" is what the bacon usually is.

"Schinken" is also from the hind leg, but with a lot less fat; this is what would be ham.

There are quite a few words I personally like in my language:

"Gestade" which means beach (Strand) or shoreline (Küste) but is a lot more poetical. "ferne Gestade" means something like the far far away shores of some obscure country, in this combination is a lot of "Fernweh" contained. Unintentionally there was the next one 😊

"Fernweh" is something like wanderlust but a lot stronger in its meaning. "Fernweh" (Fern=distant weh=ache) describes a feeling where the curiosity to see new and faraway things compells you to leave your "Heimat" (roughly translatable by home(meaning country, people and everything together)) and go away in search of those new faraway things. It is a feeling so strong that it is comparable to heart ache in its intensity.

Two more recently created words I quite like are "Turnbeutelvergesser" and "Warmduscher" both mean wimp.

The "Turnbeutelvergesser" (Turnbeutel=bag in which you carry your PE clothes, vergessen=to forget) is someone who "unintentionally" forgets his "Turnbeutel" everytime, so he or she wont have to participate at the PE, so it's generally someone always seeking the easy way out.

The "Warmduscher" (warm=warm, duschen=to take a shower) is someone who does not shower with cold but only warm water, not daring the harsher parts of life.

Another one is "Kunstparker", describing someone who has elevated parking his or her car or other vehicle to some kind of art, someone like this one here, parking his car across several parking slots for handicapped people ( <http://kunstparker.de/kpm.php?&such=12-2008> ).

An all time favorite of mine is "Plappermäulchen" (plappern=to chatter/to blab, Mäulchen: minimisation of Maul, which means yap or trap, Maul is considered to be quite rude [for example "Halt's Maul!" shut your fucking trap!] Mäulchen is nearly "cute").

The Plappermäulchen describes a person who talks a lot, mostly about lighthearted topics and is well meaning and benevolent description of such a person.

[Reply](#)

o *Tanya Bennett* says:

[July 8, 2010 at 8:25 pm](#)

First of all, thank you for the excellent explanation of the whole speck/bacon thing – I think I finally understand!

Second -thank you for all of the wonderful German words, I love them!

[Reply](#)

20. *Natalia* says:

[July 6, 2010 at 10:08 pm](#)

And what about Geschlechtsverkehr (intercourse)? When I was living in Berlin, me and two greek friends of mine (I come from Spain) always marveled about the existence of such a word. So accurate—.

[Reply](#)

◦ *Tanya Bennett* says:

[July 8, 2010 at 8:27 pm](#)

Geschlechtsverkehr = genital + contact ? A very efficient yet not very romantic description... Thanks for sharing, that's a good one!

[Reply](#)

▪ *Joerg* says:

[February 7, 2011 at 8:47 pm](#)

Geschlecht = gender

Verkehr = traffic

so it's literally "gender traffic"

[Reply](#)

▪ *Tanya Bennett* says:

[April 25, 2011 at 6:51 pm](#)

That makes it even better! Thanks -

[Reply](#)

21. *beatle* says:

[July 8, 2010 at 2:40 pm](#)

pretty nice post! im from germany and when you guys were talking about words like "Zeitgeist", "Gemütlichkeit" and "Puderzucker" i realized the first time, that this are really pretty nice words. I think i will use them more now (maybe its hardly possible to use Puderzucker more, because i dont eat "Waffeln" (waffles) that often xD).

in english i like the word "awesome" pretty much. "beautiful" is also very beautiful =)

i got another german word for you: weltenbummler (a guy who travels all over the world)

Most germans use speck and bacon (applied to meat, not fat) for the same thing, its just about cooking by yourself or ordering something at BurgerKing xD

here is a list of many german phrases translated word by word into english xD: <http://ithinkispider.com/>

[Reply](#)

◦ *Tanya Bennett* says:

[July 8, 2010 at 8:34 pm](#)

weltenbummler = world + drifter/truant/loafer (globetrotter?)

I checked out the link – I always thought "spinnen" just meant being silly, I had no idea it came from spider and that Germans called them "spinnern" – very nice description, make them sound pretty instead of scary...

[Reply](#)

▪ *beatle* says:

[July 9, 2010 at 9:03 am](#)

globetrotter is a good translation!

"spinnen" means being silly, but: one spider = eine spinne, many spiders = viele spinnen. its one word with different meanings, thats why we laugh about it xD in german it makes sense but its absolutly hilarious (also an



englisih word i like) in english =)

[Reply](#)

- *Annie* says:  
[January 28, 2011 at 3:45 pm](#)

i think "spinnen" is not just being silly but actually to tell a story that is not true. then you say something is "ersponnen und erlogen".

spinnen means also to spin with a spinning wheel and i heard that this saying comes from the women who were sitting and spinning the whole day while telling each other some stories they made up.

[Reply](#)

- *Tanya Bennett* says:  
[January 30, 2011 at 2:08 pm](#)

That makes sense – thanks for the extra information -

[Reply](#)

22. *beatle* says:  
[July 8, 2010 at 2:43 pm](#)

sorry for all this spelling errors i am a little "betueddelt"

[Reply](#)

- *Tanya Bennett* says:  
[July 8, 2010 at 8:39 pm](#)

That definition was hard to find (betueddelt is a synonym for beschwippst, meaning 'tipsy').

[Reply](#)

- *beatle* says:  
[July 9, 2010 at 9:11 am](#)

there is no better way for a translation =) must be really hard to find it!

you can also say: "einen hund betueddeln" that means something like "to fuss over a dog". also a word with two differnt meanings...

[Reply](#)

23. *wytewtr* says:  
[July 9, 2010 at 4:27 pm](#)

my favorite English word is "inching along"! This is the one place I don't mind the standard system. "Millimetering along" just doesn't sound right.

I have an old long German word to offer:

Donaudampfschiffahrtskapitänswitwenrente – the retirement payment a widow of a steamboat captain on the Danube receives.

[Reply](#)

- *Tanya Bennett* says:  
[July 9, 2010 at 7:52 pm](#)

That's one long word, thanks for sharing!

[Reply](#)

- *Emily G* says:  
[February 11, 2012 at 2:21 am](#)

What exactly does Danube mean? I stumbled across it while reading a Rammstein translation and have been wondering

about it ever since.

[Reply](#)

■ *Stefan* says:

[February 11, 2012 at 5:03 am](#)

The Danube, Donau in german, is the second largest river on the european continent 😊

Tho' I have to admit I do not know if there is a special meaning to the Name itself.

[Reply](#)

24. *Annika M* says:

[July 10, 2010 at 1:25 am](#)

One of my personal favorites was always Frauenzimmer. The dictionary says it translates to wench, but in my family we always used in relation to a gossip (usually female). I always thought it was funny, considering that my opinion was that the German men I knew were bigger gossips than the women.

[Reply](#)

○ *Tanya Bennett* says:

[July 11, 2010 at 12:35 pm](#)

Literal translation: Frauen (women/wives) + zimmer (room). Interesting. Wench, as in 'mistress' or 'wanton woman' makes sense from the literal meaning. I guess the stereotype might also be that a bunch of women in a room might tend to gossip as well, so that makes sense too.

[Reply](#)

25. :) says:

[July 10, 2010 at 1:50 pm](#)

i'm quite sure your Oma said "Muesterkens" if she came from the region around Düsseldorf. I'm also from there. Actually I think there should be a name for these "face-marks" too. I made a word up when i was a little child, i called it "Krubbel"

my favourite english words are "sophisticated", "flabbergasted" and "lovely"

[Reply](#)

26. *Mary* says:

[July 16, 2010 at 7:17 am](#)

Haha, funny list,

though it's actually "Lebensmüde", not "Lebensmude". xD

[Reply](#)

27. *Leo* says:

[July 21, 2010 at 9:36 am](#)

I think I spider !

[Reply](#)

28. *mømo* says:

[July 29, 2010 at 4:00 am](#)

We once made holidays in Australia where we met an australian couple.

She could speak a little bit german, and her favourite word was 'Anstandshappen' – thats a little piece of food you leave politely when taking the last portion so that nobody can say you left nothing over and were too greedy.

[Reply](#)

○ *Tanya Bennett* says:

[August 4, 2010 at 11:26 am](#)

Another excellent example of how concise the German language is – it took 26 words to say the same thing in English



[Reply](#)

29. *sue* says:

[August 5, 2010 at 6:55 am](#)

geschlechtsverkehr, directly translates as gender-traffic; technical term for sex 😊

[Reply](#)

30. *Giuliana* says:

[August 22, 2010 at 2:37 pm](#)

I'd suggest you correct your list, all these people kindly informed you about mistakes you made, like the whole Speck/Bacon argument of yours (which they have proven to be naught) and the ü in Lebensmüde. Why have a list up there that is obviously faulty?

I had to laugh at your way of looking at the word "Fleisch". In my country our word for human flesh and the flesh of animals is the same like with the german word Fleisch. Because of course, that's exactly what it is. What's so eww about it? Where's the difference between the flesh of humans and that of animals? None whatsoever! If you think about it, that argument is actually pretty presumptuous, to differentiate us so from all the other living beings on earth.

My favorite german word would be "Heimat". I also adore Heimweh/Fernweh and Glückseligkeit.

[Reply](#)

◦ *Tanya Bennett* says:

[August 24, 2010 at 6:46 pm](#)

It is all a matter of personal perspective, isn't it? One could argue that there is a big difference between the flesh of humans and the flesh of animals – as long as you are not a cannibal, or conversely, a vegetarian...

Likewise, I find it interesting that after reading all of the comments you have come to the opposite conclusion about the speck/bacon controversy... it seems to me that most people are saying that, while perhaps not 100% accurate, Germans still use the two words interchangeably.

I finally fixed Lebensmüde in the list – sorry it took me so long! I grew up with a missing umlaut in my last name so I guess I am desensitized...

[Reply](#)

■ *Florian* says:

[October 31, 2010 at 1:12 pm](#)

Back to Bacon.

It is correct that what is called Bacon in english is called Speck in German, and more precisely should be called Durchwachsener Speck (identical with what is sometimes called streaky Bacon only that in Germany the outtermost layer of fat will usually not be removed). However as already mentioned Speck is quite a General term and its use should be interpreted more as you would say i'll take the car to work today rather than saying ill take my red mercedes to work today.

However I (as a proud Bacon/Speck loving German) feel Obligated to go on, what you describe as a bacon-focussed rant of my own. Germans love bacon aswell. You say "Germans give bacon a bad name," by caling it what is essentially a synonym of the word fat. However in food terms fat doesnt have the same negative connotations in Germany as it does in the US. The fat on meat may be considered by many, the best part. Why, germans even smear lard on bread and eat it, in the form of Griebenschmalz(rendered pork fat with pieces of crispy pork skin, and usually onions, and herbs). So instead of giving it a bad name we are actually honouring your beloved bacon By bringing it in assocation with FAT 😊

P.S. Facebook is by no means an accurate comparison of Germans vs Americans love of bacon.

P.P.S. I know your comments will not have been meant quite seriously, but i take my speck at least as seriously as

u your bacon ; )

[Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:  
[October 31, 2010 at 5:54 pm](#)

Awesome! I love the argument and the different perspective about the word fat- thank you! Schmalz also means 'over sentimental' here- perhaps a good description of my feelings about bacon... I also found this great picture (Party Schmalz!) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Schmalz\\_ies.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Schmalz_ies.jpg)

[Reply](#)

31. [Chris](#) says:  
[September 11, 2010 at 8:08 am](#)

My favourite german word is Stinklangweilig. Something is so boring that it stinks!

[Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:  
[October 31, 2010 at 5:58 pm](#)

Stink (stink) + Langweilig (boring). Nice! Never heard of that one before, but it is more descriptive than the English expression, "It stinks," which could mean various things (It's boring, it's poor quality, it's not fair, etc).

[Reply](#)

32. [Tanya](#) says:  
[November 11, 2010 at 2:53 pm](#)

Just realized my mom calls gingerbread houses 'Hexenhauschen' - which I believe translates to witch house? Must have something to do with Hansel & Gretel...

[Reply](#)

- [sandra](#) says:  
[March 10, 2011 at 6:51 pm](#)

yes, the "Hexenhäuschen" comes from the fairy tale "Hänsel und Gretel".  
The witch lives in a gingerbread house, so that's why these gingerbread houses were created in the first place.

[Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:  
[March 12, 2011 at 12:05 am](#)

So many German fairytales are really scary – I remember reading a book of stories by the Brothers Grimm when I was a kid and being shocked by the real Snow White, Sleeping Beauty and Cinderella stories. I bet most people (at least in North America anyways) think those stories were made up by Disney...

[Reply](#)

33. [Bruce](#) says:  
[November 25, 2010 at 11:25 am](#)

another nice word from modern Germ. lit is das aneinandervorbeisein

[Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:  
[November 26, 2010 at 5:24 pm](#)

What does it mean? I think the literal translation is 'to bite into pieces,' but what is the meaning?

[Reply](#)

- [tim](#) says:  
[January 6, 2011 at 7:06 pm](#)

‘aneinandervorbeisein’ is a quite new word and its likely to be uniquely german.

it describes a situation where you spend time with one or more people but you’re not really connected with each other in this situation. like you are physically together but not mentally.

I think its something like ‘to be at cross-purposes’ in a more melancholic way.

[Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:  
[January 6, 2011 at 10:01 pm](#)

I never would have figured that out from the literal translation – nice word -

[Reply](#)

34. *Kyo* says:

[December 6, 2010 at 11:21 pm](#)

an english that really confused me when I was a child and didn’t understand any english at all was “teenager”  
I read it first in a funny comic book, were parents had problems with their “teenager” boy  
the whole book was in german, but the term “teenager” is used very common in german (like many other english words 😊),  
but I didn’t even recognized that it was an english word, because it also could be a combination of two german words  
(which is very usual in german, like mentioned earlier in this thread)  
so I read it as “tee-nager” = “tea-gnawer” or “tea-nibbler” 😊  
I thought it was a swear word for someone who is very lazy and always feels sorry for himself (because that’s wat the  
teenage boy in the comic story was like)  
and I always wondered what being lazy has to do with nibbling tea  
later wenn I learned the english word “teen-ager” I was a bit embarassed that I always pronounced it “Tee-nager” 😊

[Reply](#)

35. *Randolph* says:

[December 30, 2010 at 4:52 am](#)

My favorite long compound word auf deutsch is Bundesausbildungsfoerderungsgesetz. Google it!

[Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:  
[March 12, 2011 at 12:08 am](#)

I’m guessing you’re a student in Germany since I think that word is used to describe the law that ensures German students can go to school for free?

[Reply](#)

- [Fabian](#) says:  
[April 28, 2011 at 9:08 am](#)

Correct, you get money, if your parents don’t earn enough to provide you with a room, food etc. Don’t let these people here confuse you: The zusammengesetzte Wörter (combined words) are a topic of jokes here in Germany as well. We know that these possibility of our language can lead to horrific, non-speakable constructs. These are mostly used by lawyers, officials etc, thats why there is the term “Beamtendeutsch”

The simple solution fpr that? The “BundesAusbildungsFörderungGesetz” for example is commonly abbreviated as BAFöG

[Reply](#)

- [Tanya Bennett](#) says:  
[April 28, 2011 at 10:23 am](#)

Beamtendeutsch: “a very formal language in business correspondence of many agencies” (translated from German wikipedia). I’ve never heard of that word – thanks!

[Reply](#)



36. *Joey* says:

[January 17, 2011 at 8:22 am](#)

Back to Bacon: In bavarian bacon is normaly translated to Wammerl, and is defined as pork belly.

But Wammerl is typically used for cooking, if you want a special Schmankerl (delicacy) for your Brotzeit or Vesper (a meal or snack consisting of bread, cold cuts, cheese etc...) you would choose a Gsaichts (Geselcht, GerÄœuchert = dry-cured, smoked ham), a fine-sliced and salted white radish. And on top of your bread you would have an Obazdn (hard to translate, mashed one should do. Its a delicious cheese spread with Camembert, paprika powder and onions). If you choose to have your Brotzeit in your local Wirtshaus (Inn), you will be able to enjoy the GemÄ¼tlichkeit, which is much more then to sit comfortable.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gem%C3%BCtlichkeit>

The cabaret artist Gerhard Polt describes it brilliant (in german) here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56QdOll5f98>

Nice work with your list, it was fun to read.

[Reply](#)

◦ *Tanya Bennett* says:

[April 25, 2011 at 6:54 pm](#)

I wish there was a Wirtshaus nearby right now so i could have some Obazdn for my Brotzeit. Mmmmmm...

[Reply](#)

37. *me* says:

[January 21, 2011 at 7:43 pm](#)

perhaps you've already been told, but in #10 your "asking" what the word "muse" means. you can translate it with something very similar to inspiration.

and honestly, even if your parents are german .... the word "fahnemuse" makes absolutely no sense:D perhaps it's written different?

little fact about fleisch: we (yup, i'm german as well^^) rarely say fleisch when buying some...we just say the animal and the part which we want... "schwein" or "schweinebauch" eg.

another word i think you might like is "fleischeslust". this doesn't mean that you want some meat now, it means passion in a sexual way.

cheers ☺

[Reply](#)

◦ *Tanya Bennett* says:

[January 23, 2011 at 3:42 pm](#)

It's not a word that we really ever wrote down so my mom had to sort of guess about the spelling when I asked her. I'm not sure that pig tummy (schweinebauch?) is more appetizing than just asking for flesh? Fleischeslust is a great word, thank you for sharing- and for reading this list!

[Reply](#)

38. *Lilkty* says:

[January 30, 2011 at 2:25 am](#)

ha I knew schadenfreude and that one really long law word would be in here somewhere! ☺

I used to hear some pretty strange words back in Stuttgart and in the Schwarzwald by dialekt speakers but my all time favorite word was definitely "suess" don't really know why LOL.

funny how in spanish we also use the same word for flesh and meat. "carne"

[Reply](#)

◦ *Tanya Bennett* says:

[January 30, 2011 at 2:14 pm](#)

I think “suess” means sweet? Mmmmmm, reminds me of all of those delicious German cakes and pastries...

[Reply](#)

■ *Lilkty* says:

[January 30, 2011 at 4:45 pm](#)

I used suess also as cute. but yeah, it does mean sweet! I remember having Germknoedel (or something like that) you should ask your parents about it! its the most delicious thing ever! I think its an austrian pastry though...

[Reply](#)

39. *Lilkty* says:

[January 30, 2011 at 6:33 pm](#)

I was thinking about that bacon thing... and I have some other thing that germans are really weird about, now Im not sure if it was just the family I stayed with or germans in general but they don't seem to have a word for “cereal” meaning the boxed one that you eat with milk like frosted flakes and stuff.

apparently germans think cereal is bad for you because it has a lot of sugar or something like that, thats how they explained me the lack of a word for cereal. because it isnt very popular. but I am a very proud everyday cereal eater and Im still alive! LOL

[Reply](#)

○ *Tanya Bennett* says:

[January 31, 2011 at 7:53 pm](#)

I think Germans call cereal muesli or something like that (but it's not a German word?). Quite a lot of Germans comment here, so maybe someone can help us -

[Reply](#)

■ *Fabian* says:

[April 28, 2011 at 9:48 am](#)

I thought the term cereals means roughly “crops”... if you understand these sugar drenched kellogs things as cereals..... they ARE unhealthy. As almost every “food” what comes from the US. the standard Kelloggs Cornflakes are said to have less nutritious value than the paper box around it.

frosted they are just sugar. I don't know under what name they sell it in the US, but do you REALLY think, that these colorful loops qualify as Müsli? I know you Americans like insanely artificial so-called food (to call a twinkly a cake is a insult for every Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte 😊), but these loops are just sugar, petrochemical aroma, and petrochemical colors...

The definition of “cereals” in the dictionary is quite exactly what is a Müsli, which ist extremely popular in Germany. It means anything you can put on yoghurt or in milk, and that has cereals in it. The classical is anything with oats and raisins (or other dried fruits), and today normally combined with cornflakes or something similiar. (Plus, depending on your taste, nuts, fresh fruits, chocolate chips, honey, whatever) And thats healthy (well, the old fashioned without chocolate 😊), you get carbonhydrates and dietary fibers, perfect breakfast.

Is it just my opinion, or doesn't the average american give a s\*\*\* about what the words he uses mean? Sorry, offtopic, i won't talk about the term “football” 😊

[Reply](#)

■ *Tanya Bennett* says:

[April 28, 2011 at 12:38 pm](#)

Merriam Webster dictionary defines cereal as 1: a plant (as a grass) yielding starchy grain suitable for food; 2: a prepared foodstuff of grain (as oatmeal or cornflakes).

Whether the breakfast cereal is healthy or not isn't a qualification apparently (thank goodness, I don't have to give up my Count Chocula and my Sugar Smacks!) so it looks like the ‘average American’ is using the right

word to me. 😊

I'm actually Canadian so I think when you say 'you Americans' you are not referring to me but perhaps the commenter above me – unless you've swept our entire country into your rather broad generalizations about the residents of the U.S.A. as well. 😊

I don't think cake is a German word so I don't see how calling Twinkies cake offends you – maybe if it was called a Schwarzwälder Twinkie.... (Mmmm... a chocolate twinkie with cherries and whipped cream inside? Delicious!) Keep in mind that many US citizens may be just as proud of their Twinkies as Germans are of the traditional foods in their culture. Twinkies have been around for more than 80 years (a long time in a country that has only been around for around 225 years).

My favorite German cakes are the Bienenstich (Bee Sting cake) and the Baumkuchen (Tree cake) – much more delicious than they sound! My favorite American (U.S.A.) cake is Red Velvet (with cream cheese frosting of course). Now I am officially hungry. Thanks. 😊

#### [Reply](#)

■ *Fabian* says:

[April 29, 2011 at 9:55 pm](#)

I'm sorry, usually i use "USA", when I want to say "USA"... the "American" thing is baaaad... i know. I don't want to be Bavarian, Nazi, or Austrian, when I say I'm german. So my apologies to all Canadians, Mexicans, Southamericans... you may stay independent from the USEmpire as long as you have no Oil 😊

I insist on my opinion that there is an unbelievable amount of food in the US that i can only describe as perverted. Even if i like some of it. The "Germans don't eat cereals" just freaked me out, because we have really a mass of cereals here. they just don't look like Kelloggs. Ok, the most really do look like it. But Germany is heavy in all this "eco and sustainability" stuff.

I totally agree on Baumkuchen. This red velvet thing sounds quite odd in wikipedia (food color? buttercream? vanilla? Overkill!), but the recipe of the Buttercreme Torte of my grandma also reads like a manual for arteriosclerosis, so who am i to judge 😊

#### [Reply](#)

■ *TopTenz Master* says:

[April 29, 2011 at 10:41 pm](#)

Watch it, you will give us Americans a complex.

■ *Tanya Bennett* says:

[April 29, 2011 at 11:26 pm](#)

About liking unhealthy food? I'm certainly not judging- I have a serious weakness for snack cakes or pretty much anything you can buy at a U.S. gas station. Road trips with me are not pretty 😊 Hot Rods and Ho Hos, anyone?!

■ *Tanya Bennett* says:

[April 29, 2011 at 11:27 pm](#)

The amount of food colouring you have to add to make the cake red can be a bit daunting but man is it ever delicious.

40. *Joerg* says:

[February 7, 2011 at 9:02 pm](#)

This is actually not quite accurate. There are some German words that are used simply as emphatics which can be combined with other words, and aren't really related to the original meaning of the word. In English the same is accomplished by adding "as hell" to a word.

For example:

Stinkelangweilig = boring as hell  
 Stinkelang = long as hell  
 Stinkelahm = slow as hell

other words in German that can be substituted in for “stinke” to produce the same meaning (though some are more vulgar than others) are:

Sau (literally: a female pig or sow)  
 Scheiss(e) (literally: feces(vulgar))

Of these “sau” is the most versatile, and (at least in the swabian dialect) can be applied to just about anything.

[Reply](#)

41. [Gunnar](#) says:

[February 12, 2011 at 9:09 pm](#)

Hi there,

i was just surfing around, looking in toptenz for nice stuff when i saw your site and came to a halt.

Yeah, i'm a german aswell, and for first i'll tell you that the word HALT in german means exact the same like in english. It's a immediate stop 😊

Next, the three most used words in the german language are :

1. Nein (No)
2. Ich (me myself and i)
3. Geld (money)

The longest word i'll have for you is :

Dialektforschung ... this is the longest real word which exists in the german language with no letter replied. It means Dialect (Idiom) Research

But, sure, you can make up a lot of words together to get sometimes real long words, like  
 Massenkommunikationsdienstleistungsunternehmen  
 Massen(-mass|es)kommunikations(-communications)dienstleistung(-service)[s]unternehmen(-business)

In german Massen is plural, so masses, but it's ment singular : Mass  
 the same for communications, in this term it's not ment many communications, just a business who is making their money by selling communications  
 the [s] i can't explain, it's just some binding thing 😊 in the german language  
 So, finally we got to :

Mass Communication Service Business.

Just write it together and you'll have the same crap like the germans have : Masscommunicationservicebusiness. Thats all;-)

My favorite english words are incredible and amazing, don't know why, they sound just ..eh.. amazing.

And, at least, i love the word Hinterwäldler.

Someone who's not living behind some forest but someone who don't know nothing about nothing you can say o.o the translationmachine puts out backwoodsman, but i'm actually not sure if this is right. Maybe you'll know better.

Schöne Grüße an Dich und Deine Eltern 😊 aus Barmstedt, Schleswig-Holstein, Deutschland

PS : my favorites in your list are Flusen (really nice) and, of course, Brustwarze

[Reply](#)

o [Tanya Bennett](#) says:

[February 13, 2011 at 4:52 pm](#)

I think I'm going to start talking in extremely long compound words in English- that would be a lot of fun. For example, right now I am Blogcommentresponsification (okay, it was my first attempt, I will have to work on that a bit...)

Thanks for stopping by and thanks for your fun and informative addition to this conversation (and celebration) of kickass German Words 😊

[Reply](#)

42. *SteakAndAlePie* says:

[February 15, 2011 at 12:27 pm](#)

First off, this was a great read!

I think we have a word for cereals in "Frühstücksflocken" [breakfast flakes] but very few people are actually using it. Most common is (which I kinda detest) "Kellogs", not taking into account whether its actually made by said company.

Müsli is swiss or switzerdeutsch but is commonly used in Germany for oatmeal intermixed with raisins and nuts.

Some favourite German unnamed words are "Dämmerzustand" [daze, "dusk state"] and "Rundumdrehspeigelwarnleuchte". The latter is the device commonly used on vintage police cars and working sites to attract attention. I think the famous Naked Gun opening scene shows one in its finest glory. [Allaround spinning-mirror attention light]

When talking German I often miss the word ridiculous, as its counterpart "ridikül" was replaced by "lächerlich" [loughable] which often misses the point.

[Reply](#)

43. *Vibarts Voice* says:

[March 7, 2011 at 10:44 am](#)

Nice blog – it's very amusing to read about your own language from a foreign perspective. By the way: Sorry for my bad English. Apart from the mind bending "bacon-problem" I'd like to add that "Muesli" refers specific to the above mentioned mixture from oatmeal, nut's and fruits and can not be used for cornflakes or other cereals. "Frühstücksflocken" is the technical term printed on lots of german cereal boxes, but when I was a kid, my parents and i used to call my favorite breakfast just by the name on the box "Kellogs Smacks."

Some of the word-combinations mentioned here are quite "theoretical", most german speakers wouldn't use them in one single word. The "Donaudampfschiffahrtskapitänswitwenrente" would be usually described with: "Die Rente der Witwe eines Dampfschiffkapitäns auf der Donau." But at least "Schiffahrt" is an interesting word with three "f" in a row.

I'm trying to think for a nice german word for you... What about this: Right now today, in Stuttgart, we have "Kaiserwetter", when I look out of my window... try to figure that one out.

[Reply](#)

◦ *Vibarts Voice* says:

[March 7, 2011 at 10:47 am](#)

I misspelled "Schiffahrt" once. Damn it!

[Reply](#)

▪ *Tanya Bennett* says:

[April 25, 2011 at 6:57 pm](#)

Cheese weather?

[Reply](#)

44. *Seo* says:

[March 7, 2011 at 1:48 pm](#)

Nice list. 😊

I'm saying "cornflakes" to any kind of cereals, even when they aren't flakes at all. But others know what I'm talking about, or at least they get an idea of it, so... ^^

But “Kellogs” is also used by a lot of people when talking about cereals, as mentioned before.

My favourite literal translation of a german saying is “I only understand train station”. 😊

German words I like are “Bücherwurm” (book worm) or “Leseratte” (reading rat). They had a rather negative touch in the past, when reading had the same status as playing games has today. But as reading began to establish as a “Freizeitbeschäftigung” through all social layers, the negative association turned into a more positive one. Nowadays, Bücherwurm is mostly used for children, who read a lot (which is a considered to be a good thing mostly 😊), Leseratte refers more to older people (teenagers, adults) and is used as a “Kosename” (pet name/term of endearment) sometimes.

Another german word I like is “Weltall”. 😊

[Reply](#)

45. *Schinderhannes* says:

[March 7, 2011 at 5:10 pm](#)

Milchmädchenrechnung: Milch (Milk) – mädchen (maid) – rechnung (calculation) = A milkmaid’s calculation  
- a rather naive approach to solve a problem (e.g. calculating something) while misinterpreting or even completely ignoring crucial factors/conditions resulting in a seemingly/superficially correct but ultimately wrong solution

Schifferscheisse: Schiffer (Boatman) – scheisse (self-explanatory) = A boatman’s dump/shit  
– mostly used in the insult “dumm wie Schifferscheisse” meaning “as dumb as a boatman’s dump/shit”, which basically is an upgraded version of “dumm wie Scheisse” (“as dumb as shit”).

I think, adding the “Schiffer”-prefix became more popular after a few occasions/incidents in which Claudia Schiffer consolidated her status as the stereotypical “dumb blonde bimbo” (at least in Germany), but I could be wrong on that.

Leichenschmaus: Leiche[n] (Corpse) – schmaus (feast) = Corpse feast  
- the suggestive/questionable ring to it (yes, even in german) aside, it just describes the get-together or gathering of the participants of a funeral to have meal or dinner after the burial service. You could use it for the other meaning, though.

Des Pudels Kern: Des (The) – Pudel[s] (poodle[s]) – Kern (core) = The poodle’s core (Core of the poodle)  
- originating from Faust’s discovery (“Das also war des Pudels Kern“ – “This was the poodle’s real core”) of the black poodle that had followed him into his house after the Easter day stroll transforming and actually being a travelling scholar (Mephisto in disguise) of some sort.

Gretchenfrage: Gretchen (short for Margarete, Faust’s love interest in Goethe’s Faust) – frage (question) = Gretchen question  
- direct question straight to the point preventing the one who’s questioned from evading/avoiding and forcing her/him to reveal his true intentions (e.g. make a confession).

[Reply](#)

46. *Coon* says:

[March 10, 2011 at 1:36 pm](#)

Very nice list 😊

So one of my favorite words ist “Kindergarden” that where used in german and in english to.

Other word combination is “Geistiger Tiefflieger” which means that someone is a idiot or someone with a limited mind. Geistiger = mind, Tief = low, Flieger = other word for airplane. So the english translation sounds very funny Geistiger Tiefflieger = mental low flying airplane.

Another funny word is “Lackaffe” its a insult word for someone who is arrogant and selfish. But its sound quitly different from what it mean. “Lack” = finish, “Affe” = ape. But today it is not often used.

“Du Hanswurst!” hm thats not easy 😊. Du Hanswurst -> You are a sausage guy who is called Hans! It means a little fearful guy or a guy who is small and weak. You can also say “Angsthase” to a fearful person. “Angst” = fear, “Hase” = bunny.

“Ich fresse einen Besen” -> I eat a broom. Its a phrase when you are surprised at something like “if that works i’ll eat my hat!”



“Hosenscheißer” -> Someone who shits in his pants ^^ . A phrase for a fearful child. If a child is fearing for something you can say “Hosenscheißer”.

“Schlitzohr” is an older word for “Betrüger” which means cheater. “Schlitz” slit or small slot, “Ohr” Ear.

So that’s all folks. Sorry my english is under pig 😊

#### [Reply](#)

◦ *sandra* says:

[March 10, 2011 at 7:04 pm](#)

“Schlitzohr” means cheater, but that’s taken figuratively nowadays. It stems from a literal meaning though. In former centuries, an apprentice would receive an earring as a sign that he completed his apprenticeship. Those guys then would wander through the country as journeymen. Whenever one of them was found guilty of deception (like charging money for poor work), this earring would be torn forcefully out of their ears, which would leave a slit in the earlobe. This was punishment as well as a warning for other people: don’t trust a “Schlitzohr”!! 😊

#### [Reply](#)

47. *sandra* says:

[March 10, 2011 at 7:12 pm](#)

My favorite german word is as short and simple as it is hard to describe in english: it’s “Jein”.

Jein is a mix of JA and NEIN (yes and no) and it has different meanings, always in a context with the rest of the sentence: yes, but...

no, but...

I’m indecisive...

well... I would like to, if ...

This won’t happen, unless...

You can go on like that for ages, and I can’t think of a similar english word 😊

#### [Reply](#)

48. *servus* says:

[March 11, 2011 at 11:06 pm](#)

There is a nice German idiom

“Dumm wie Dosenbrot” (stupid like can bread)

wich refers to another idiom

“Brot kann schimmeln, was kannst du” (Bread can mould, what can you do?)

It means you are too stupid to do anything. And can Bread (it really exists in Germany

<http://www.fitnessworld24.net/images/dosenbrot-png-datei-kopie.jpg>) can’t mould.

#### [Reply](#)

49. *Johannes R* says:

[March 13, 2011 at 1:20 pm](#)

I come from Germany and I disagree with some words.

“Speck” means only “fat” and not bacon. Bacon is mainly translated with Schinken or “geräucherter Schinken” (smoked Bacon).

And we have two words for “nipple”: “Nippel” (spelling is exactly the same) and rarely “Brustwarze”.

By the way.. I’ve never heard of “Fahnenmuse”.. and “Weltschmerz” sounds a bit like a word from the middle ages which nobody still uses in Germany.

“Lebensmüde” means for example if you’re doing something really dangerous and there is a possibility that you may die.

Some fearful people would describe skydiving as “Lebensmüde” for example.

But Schadenfreude is a really nice word that means for example if you laugh when someone bumps on the ground or something like that or fails at something and you think that it is funny.

“Rindfleischetikettierungsüberwachungsaufgabenübertragungsgesetz”... I’ve never heard of it but it sounds like a

bureaucratic german word 😊

By the way some german words that are used in the US: Kindergarten, Bier (Bear – same spelling) an much more:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_German\\_expressions\\_in\\_English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_German_expressions_in_English)

“Unkameradschaftlichkeit” isn’t only used for Soldiers, but also Sport Teams an Schoolclasses and mostly everything where many persons are.

mfg RöGi

[Reply](#)

50. *schneefink* says:

[March 14, 2011 at 9:05 am](#)

Really amazing, I had some good laughs 😊

For me, it’s very interesting to read how you’re experiencing our language in such a charming way! 😊

But, actually (I’m sorry if that has been said before, I haven’t written ALL the comments 😊), we never say Schwangerschaftverhütungsmittel ! The idea made me laugh, cause you’re right, there would have been lots of things finished before you would have been able to say the word 😊

For girls who are taking a medicament we just say “Pille” and for the boys it’s “kondom” (you might know that 😊).

Schwangerschaftverhütungsmittel is probably a word just used in the media.

And I, as a german girl, love the word “Jein” as well. It’s amazing. But confusing the boys who are even fighting with our “yes” and “no” when it’s clearly spoken out. But our “Jein” is ... yeah... the overkill? 😊

I like the words “Schneeflocke” (snowflake) and ankuscheln (to snuggle up) in both languages. Specially “snuggle up”...my favorite 😊

I also like the german word “Spiegel” (mirror) as it’s also used for “Spiegelei” (fried egg).

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